

TRANSLATING MODAL VERBS WITH TRANSLATION ENVIRONMENT SHOULD AND OUGHT TO

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Rezumat Articolul prezintă o posibilă legătură dintre lingvistica comparată și practica traducerii prin intermediul unui program de traducere. Scopul nostru este analiza necesității de a crea o bază de terminologie privind unele verbe modale cu ajutorul programului de traducere MemoQ, folosind exemple conținând propoziții cu verbe modale din diferite cărți de gramatică și literatură. Aceste verbe sunt introduse în baza de termeni în limba engleză, română și maghiară, iar propozițiile sunt adăugate memoriei de traducere. Această memorie, împreună cu baza de termeni este verificată prin intermediul unui nou proiect de traducere cu exemple din *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Rezultatele par să ilustreze că doar unele verbe modale merită să fie salvate în baza de termeni și în memoria de traducere. În concluzie amintim și viitorul programelor de traducere.

Introduction

The importance of translation studies has steadily risen in the last decades, due to at least three factors. The unifying Europe created the European Parliament, the greatest contractor regarding translation in Europe operating through its Directorate General for Translation (the European Commission's in-house translation service). Secondly, the development of computer technology offered the chance of creating and handling different types of translation software: translation memories, term bases (glossaries) and translation environments. Last, but not least, we can mention the development of language studies: comparative linguistics and translation studies in particular.

This paper deals with a possible link between linguistics (morphology) and translation studies based on a translation environment. Our main aim is to analyse whether it is worth creating a translation memory and a term base regarding a few modal verbs within a very successful translation environment, *MemoQ*. Thus sample sentences containing English modal verbs have been collected from grammar books and then added to the translation memory and term base of *MemoQ*. This preliminary study examines what happens when sentences with *should* and *ought to* are added to a term base and translation memory and then new literary and technical texts containing these modals are opened in *MemoQ* to have them translated.

The English modal verbs

As Lyons suggests (1977: 452), modality involves the speakers' "opinion and attitude", and Palmer adds (1990: 2) that the English modal verbs

“are to be included in a typological account of modality”. We can talk about epistemic, deontic or dynamic modality (cf. Palmer), thus we need to collect samples regarding these meanings, if we are to convey their correctly in Romanian and Hungarian. We are aware that there are huge differences even among Indo-European languages (English and Romanian), let alone English, which is analytical and Hungarian, which is basically synthetical (Klaudy 2003: 176). This is further complicated by the speakers' subjectiveness when modals are involved, yet we tend to think that some modal meanings are worth pre-translated and fed into a translation environment to enhance translation quality. The English modals are considered to be auxiliary verbs, but they have a unique form (no third person singular -s ending) and they do not have past-tense forms (Palmer 1990, Imre 2008). However, Palmer (1990: 15) warns us that the core meaning of modals always has to be deduced from the context. Greere – Zdrenghia states that “A modal verb or modal expression in a sentence can be used for different purposes and with different meanings in different situations.” (2000: 98). Palmer summarizes: “Subjectivity is an essential feature of modality” (1990: 206).

We have tried, however, to find some features of modals verbs, which make it possible to systematically use them in translation, so we looked for morpho-syntactic characteristics. Palmer observes that in a sequence, modal verbs always occur first (1990: 203), whereas Huddleston (1976: 340) refers to the 'TNP tests' (tense, negation, and passivization). Although these TNP tests do not provide a clear line between modals and other verbs, they suggest a gradience between them (Palmer 1990: 206-7), so we have searched for samples with different tenses, both affirmative, negative, interrogative forms, as well as voice-related examples. We can agree with Palmer regarding his conclusion: the main verb is the head of the verbal phrase and the auxiliary (*ie* modal verb) is the modifier.

Should and ought to

According to Palmer (1990: 13), *should* is “essentially an independent modal, with no past time reference, yet it is formally the past tense of *shall* and for *must* and *ought to*”. He is explicit in stating that *should* does not express necessity, but an extreme likelihood, or a reasonable assumption or conclusion, and it “has nothing directly in common with *shall*” (Palmer 1990: 29, 59). Dynamic *should* allows for the event not to take place, and Palmer (1990) argues that there is a certain negative implication: “things are not as suggested, that the proposition is not in fact true or that the event does not or will not take place”. This is the reason why he supports the idea that the epistemic necessity of *should* is semantically related to *must* and not *shall*. Except for the much higher occurrence, *should* and *ought to* “seem to be largely interchangeable” (Palmer 1990), even with tag questions. Similarly to *must*, they can express 'weaker' (moral) obligation, duty, sensible action (*He should/ ought to come tomorrow, but he won't.*, Palmer) as *must* “does not allow for the event referred to not to take place” (Palmer 1990: 123, Greere – Zdrenghia 2000, Imre 2008), or even a strong possibility. Greere – Zdrenghia (2000: 143) adds that this necessity for *should* and *ought to* must be potential or tentative, unreal. A further important issue is, that both *should* and *ought to*

occur with a comparative adverb or adjective (*You should read, my dear, more. I think people ought to be better informed.*), which means that the subject failed to reach the standards suggested (Palmer). If *should* and *ought to* is followed by the perfect infinitive (*have* + past participle), it implies that the event did not happen (Palmer 1990, Imre 2008), so it is an unfulfilled past obligation (Greere – Zdrengea 2000). Another type of past is context-based (*In my youth children did as they should/ ought to*, Perkins, cited by Greere – Zdrengea 2000). Future forms are not available for either *should* or *ought to*, but they typically refer to (near) future events. They are generally voice-neutral (Palmer), although passive forms are rare. Cases when they appear in reported speech do not significantly change their meaning. Negative forms are also worth considering (*should not, shouldn't, ought not to, oughtn't to*), as they “negate the proposition, just as *mustn't* does – there is a necessity not to act” (Palmer 1990: 125), although the event in fact took place if a perfect negative form is used. Further cases are connected to (idiomatic) expressions and the table below lists those samples which are introduced in the translation environment, to be discussed later.

The sample sentences come from Palmer 1990 [p], Vianu 1999 [v], Greere – Zdrengea 2000 [gz], Budai 1994 [b] and Imre 2008 [i], unless otherwise stated. The English sentences are numbered in round brackets, “R” stands for Romanian and “H” stands for Hungarian; the words in bold signal that they have been introduced in the glossary of a *MemoQ* translation project. The Romanian and Hungarian sentences are provided either by the respective source or by the author of this article.

Present advice, duty	(1) You should study more. 1R. Ar trebui să studiezi mai mult. 1H. Többet kellene tanulnod.	[i]
Present neg.	(2) That shouldn't be difficult. 2R. N-ar trebui să fie greu. 2H. Nem kellene nehéznek lennie/ nehéz legyen.	[p]
Present progressive	(3) She should be enjoying the sunshine. 3R. Ar trebui să se bucure de soare. 3H. A napsütést kellene élvezze.	[i]
Past 1	(4) In my youth children did as they should /ought to . 4R. În copilăria mea, copii făceau cum trebuia . 4H. Kiskoromban a gyerekek úgy tettek, ahogy kellett .	[p]
Past 2	(5) You should/ ought to have told me about it earlier. 5R. Trebuia să-mi spui mai devreme. 5H. Korábban el kellett volna mondanod. (6) She should have arrived by now. 6R. Trebuia să/ Ar fi trebuit să sosească până acum. 6Ha. Mostanra már bizonyára/ biztosan megérkezett. 6Hb. Mostanra már meg kellett érkeznie.	[gz] [gz]

Past2 + Neg.	(7) You shouldn't have spent all you money. 7R. N-ar fi trebuit/ Nu trebuia să-ți cheltui toți banii. 7H. Nem kellett volna az összes pénzt elköltened.	[gz]
= mustn't	(8) You oughtn't to pick your nose. 8Ra. Să nu-ți scobești nasul! 8Rb. Nu-ți scobi nasul! 8H. Ne piszkáld az orrodát!	[gz]
Should is in the protasis, will in the apodosis	(9) If he should come I will let you know. 9Ra. Dacă s-ar întâmpla să vină, te anunț. 9Rb. De-ar veni, te voi anunța. 9H. Ha mégis/netán eljönne, értesítelek.	[gz]
Should is in the protasis, will in the apodosis, more doubt	(10) If John should come, Mary would leave. 10R. Dacă totuși/ cumva ar veni John, Mary ar pleca. 10H. Ha John mégis eljönne, Mary távozna.	[p]
Conditional, inversion, formal	(10) Should you happen to be passing, do drop by. 10R. Dacă s-ar întâmpla să fii în trecere, vizitează-mă. 10Ha. Ha netalántán/mégis/ esetleg/ véletlenül erre járnál, ugorj be. 10Hb. Ha úgy adódik , hogy erre jársz, ugorj be.	[gz]
Tentative or conditional 'necessity'	(11) There's no reason why they should be ... 11R. Nu văd nici un motiv de ce ar trebui să fie... 11H. Nem látok semmi okot miért kellene... legyen...	[p]
Reported speech	(12) He asked what he should do. 12Ra. M-a întrebat ce să facă. 12Rb. M-a întrebat ce ar trebui să facă. 12H. Megkérdezte, mit kellene tegyen.	[v]
Interr. politeness +	(13) Should I help you? 13R. Să te ajut? 13H. Segítsek?	[i]
Interr. + ask for advice	(14) Should I stay more? 14R. Să mai stau? 14H. Még maradjak?	[i]
So that shouldn't +	(15) He left early so that he shouldn't miss the train. 15R. A plecat devreme să nu întârzie de la tren. 15H. Korán indult, hogy nehogy lekésse a vonatot.	[i]
lest+should	(16) He was scared lest he should slip on ... 16R. Îi era frică să nu/ ca nu cumva să alunece... 16H. Félt, hogy nehogy elcsússzon a...	[gz]
Expression	(17) How should I know?	[gz]

17R. <i>De unde să știu?</i>	[i]
17H. <i>Honnan tudjam?</i>	
(18) <i>You should have seen him!</i> [Ország]	
18R. <i>De l-ai fi văzut! Sól fi vazut</i>	
18H. <i>Látnod kellett volna! Ha láttad volna!</i>	
(19) <i>I should think so!</i> [Ország]	
19R. <i>Ba bine că nu!</i>	
19H. <i>Azt meg HISZEM!</i>	[i]
(20) <i>Should the occasion arise...</i> [Ország]	
20R. <i>Dacă s-ar ivi ocazia...</i>	
20H. <i>Ha úgy adódik...</i>	
(21) <i>How should I have known?</i>	
21R. <i>De unde era să știu?</i>	
21H. <i>Honnan tudhattam volna?</i>	

Table 1: Possible translations for should and ought to

Translation environments

The possibility of faster and more accurate translation seems to be at hand since the appearance of translation environments. In our project we have been using *MemoQ* (version 4.2.15). This translation environment is one of the most top-notch products in the field, as it is extremely user-friendly and offers an outstanding online technical support as well as free webinars and updates once the product is purchased. It can handle various document types, such as Microsoft Office files, HTML files, XML files or XLIFF (XML Localization Interchange File Format) files, which can be processed in other translation tools such as *SDL® Trados™* and translation editors (cf. *MemoQ Quick Start Guide* 2010). The main parts of this software are the translation memory, the term base, the aligner and the translation editor (word processor). As *MemoQ* developers explain:

The translation memory stores pairs of sentences. As you proceed in the text, the translation workspace checks if the translation memory contains a sentence similar enough to the one you are translating. If there is such a sentence, it will appear as a translation hit, and the workspace will indicate the difference between the current sentence and the stored sentence. ... If you want to build a glossary from certain expressions and their translations, you can use the term base. Terms are expressions in multiple languages, optionally complemented with additional data. The word processor in the translation workspace automatically displays the translations of the terms occurring in the text, to be inserted using a single keystroke. (*MemoQ Quick Start Guide*, 2010)

In order to test the efficiency of this translation environment, we have selected the above-translated sentences to add to the term base and translation memory. Then we opened a new document with a selection of sentences containing *should/ ought to* from *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (2004), a collection of vast literary mixture including the Bible, poetry and prose in English. The results are presented in the conclusion.

Results and conclusions

It is common knowledge that technical texts belonging to certain areas often contain repetitive elements, especially when newer versions of various products appear on the market (improved hardware or software upgrades), and *MemoQ* developers claim that effectiveness in these cases can reach up to 70%, and in cases of academic or other texts this percentage is about 10 – 30%. The good parts of using a translation environment is that it saves the translator from translating twice or even more things that appeared somewhere before in the text (or previous texts), although these words and expressions have to be added one by one to the term base. If a term base is handled properly, it can help in creating new term bases (it offers an extra source, no need for a dictionary or another meticulous search) and even offers the chance of easily revising and improving previous translation databases.

In case of *should* and *ought to* we could observe that the items added to the term base gave only partial results: basically, the addition of *should* and *shouldn't* was successful, except for the cases when these were in a conditional 'environment'. If *should* appears combined with *if*, probably a better result is obtained if all personal pronouns are fed into to the term base together with *if* and *should*. Although we have included the combination of *lest* and *should*, not a single case was detected due to the words in-between these two, so it would be worth trying to add to the term base at least all the personal pronouns with *lest* and *should*.

All the cases with Interrogative, negative, past participle, simple, progressive forms were easily detected by *MemoQ*. However, it is worth mentioning that the software offered translation for *shoulder*, as it was perceived as *should* plus something else.

Interestingly, the same problem did not occur with *ought to*, as after having analysed the case with *should*, we included *brought to* and *wrought to* for testing purposes. This time *MemoQ* was not willing to take the bait. In fact, all the cases with *ought to* and *oughtn't to* were successfully recognized, although out of 1768 pages only 13 instances were found, out of which two negative forms.

We must have underestimated the importance of some idiomatic constructions with *should*, for instance *why + should*, as relatively many instances were found, but they were not previously added to the term base. On the other hand, we have added other constructions with *should*, which were not really helpful (e.g. sentences 15-17, 11), so for further testing more real-life texts should be added.

Palmer (1990: 189) correctly observed that *should* is redundant in some cases (*It surprises me that Eileen should be surprised.*), so we haven't included them in the term base, and all the *should*-cases with a similar construction needed no translation. These constructions (*determined, order, command, urge, demand, ask, desire, favour, insist, require, propose, it's odd/ strange, etc. + should*) may be translated, for instance with imperative forms, thus *should* disappears when translated, except for the Romanian *să*. Although this conjunction was added to the term base, it is questionable whether it

contributes to a faster translation, as it both contains a Romanian diacritical mark (position on a keyboard) and its shortcut is the combination of the control key (Ctrl) plus the number key corresponding to its position in the term base (Ctrl + 2 in the picture below):

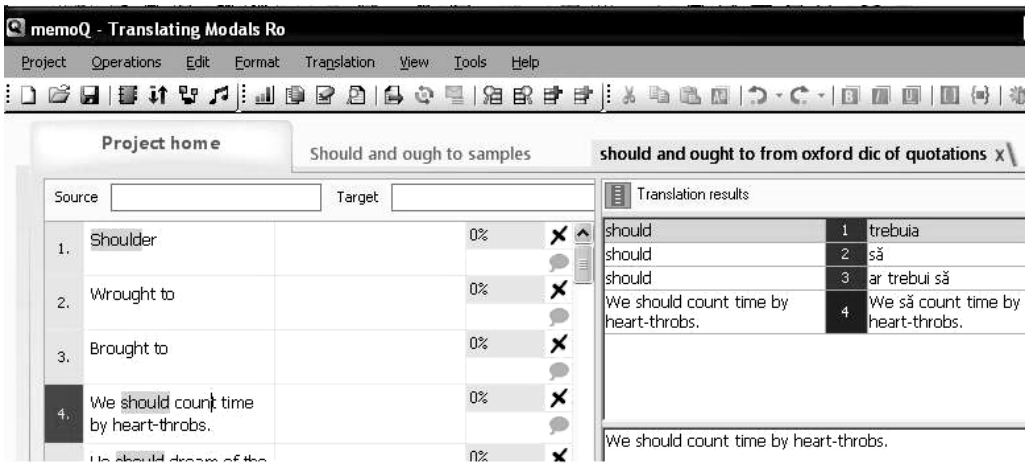


Illustration 1: Translating should

In conclusion, we can say that based on our research, although in its initial stage, it is worth trying to build a systematic network of the English modal verb term base in a translation environment, as it may improve the quality and shrink the time of translation. Although many recent (usually online) articles state that the days of human translation are to be ended (Zetzsche 2009, Boulton 2010), this is questionable. The best scenario is that machine translation comes to support human translation with an immense database, but the translation memory will be much more limited, as the chance of fully repeating a sentence is very reduced, except for idiomatic expressions, clichés and specific situations (very similar technical texts, everyday conversations).

Regarding modals, it seems that the fewer usages/ meanings a modal verb has, the higher the chance for the translation environment to recognize (cf. *ought to*). Consequently, creating a term base of the so-called 'semi-modals' (*used to, had better, would rather, be bound to, be able to, have to, have got to, be going to*, Palmer 1990) will probably result in a much more effective translation. We are quite aware that the modern age of translation industry seems to have forgotten pencil and paper (Pym 2002). As translation seems to be a thriving business, more and more CAT-tools emerge, and the evolution of CAT-tools seems inevitable (Imre, forthcoming). With human supervision.

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